

VZCZCXYZ0002
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #0204/01 0540940
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 230940Z FEB 09
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0964
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8944
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0394

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 000204

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - NIDA EMMONS
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: SECRETARY OF STATE CLINTON'S ASIA TRIP

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage February 21-23 on the "national policy conference" organized by the opposition parties; on the local economic downturn plus various government policies; and United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to China.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed in the pro-unification "United Daily News" said Secretary of State Clinton choosing Asia to be her first trip overseas demonstrated that the new Obama Administration highly values its relations with Asia and China. The op-ed commented on the three issues that Clinton dealt with when she was in Beijing: the rejection of protectionism, the Strategic Dialogue between China and the United States, and the relations among the United States, China and Taiwan. The op-ed urged Washington, Beijing and Taipei to find a way to seize this historical opportunity and create a win-win-win scenario for the three parties while tensions are easing across the Taiwan Strait. A column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" urged Taiwan to discover and develop its own soft power while the world and the United States' Asia-Pacific policy are changing and the importance of Taiwan to the United States is declining. Another op-ed in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" recounted what United States Pacific Commander Admiral Timothy Keating said in Hong Kong last week. The op-ed said Pentagon and Pacific Command were surprised that it was United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who announced that China and the United States are to resume military exchanges. End summary.

A) "[Secretary] Hillary [Clinton] Shows Her Hand; A Good Opportunity for the Win-Win-Win for the United States, China and Taiwan"

Professor Edward Chen of Tamkang University's Graduate institute of American Studies opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (2/23):

"... The problem is that it is by no means easy for the United States and China jointly to reject protectionism. For example, United States President Barack Obama did not veto "Buy America," a clause contained in the 800 billion U.S. dollar economic recovery package that the United States Congress passed. This showed that the United States' protectionism is gaining ground. Beijing is especially sensitive about the development, because it could initiate the rise of protectionism in the world. It would be a big strike at China's economy which is export-oriented. Therefore, [China] hopes that during the visit of [United States Secretary of State] Hillary [Clinton] and before the upcoming financial summit staged in London on April 2, [China and the United States] can set the tone for 'jointly rejecting protectionism.'

"With respect to comprehensively upgrading the mutual high-level strategic dialogue, Clinton suggested revising the framework of the Sino-U.S. high-level strategic dialogue by changing the original 'Strategic Economic Dialogue,' led by the two countries' Minister of Finance and the Secretary of the Treasury, as well as the 'Strategic Dialogue,' which was at the deputy foreign ministers' level, into a 'comprehensive strategic dialogue,' which will be led by the foreign

ministries of both sides. [Such a comprehensive strategic dialogue] will include issues, such as regional security, cooperation in energy, climate change and human rights. To Clinton personally, as the head of many government officials [of the United States], when dealing with the global financial crisis, she almost let the Secretary of Treasury Timothy Geithner take the lead. In terms of holding the Strategic Economic Dialogue and the Strategic Dialogue, the lead almost fell into [United States] Vice President Joe Biden's hands. Being able to make two continuous draws in this overseas trip [to China], Clinton can be regarded as showing her high spirit and energy.

"Finally, concerning the relationship among the United States, China and Taiwan, Clinton showed her hand constantly upon her arrival at Beijing. Clinton reiterated the Taiwan Relations Act, saying that [the United States] will continue to sell arms to Taiwan. Then Clinton said [the United States] wants to restore mutual trust between the United States and Taiwan. Clinton was certain that cross-Strait relations are warming, and it is not easy for Beijing to voice its opposition. ..."

B) "Taiwan's Soft National Power"

The column "Concept Platform" in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 150,000] wrote (2/23):

"United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reached an agreement with Japan, the first stop of her Asia trip, to redeploy 8,000 United States Marines on Okinawa to Guam before 2014. Although 8,000 soldiers is only a small portion of the United States' military deployed in Japan, the [troop] movement shows that the United States is gradually building Guam as a key military position in the Western Pacific. Another implication [of the troop

movement] is that the United States is backing off from the island chain that blocks China. ...

"... The United States' Asia-Pacific policy is changing. Even though the United States reiterates that it lives up to the Taiwan Relations Act and, realistically, Taiwan's security still relies on the protection of the United States. However, with respect to the major trend, Taiwan is being displaced on the strategic map of Asia-Pacific. When the military importance of Okinawa to the United States is declining gradually, the importance of Taiwan [to the United States] is declining even more. In the past, sitting in between the two hegemonies of the United States and China, Taiwan used to lean close to the United States. Nowadays, Taiwan somehow gradually shifted itself to the middle of the United States and China. Some people are even worried that [Taiwan] is leaning too much toward China, and such apprehension also exists in the controversy of [Taiwan signing a] Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) [with China]. ...

C) "US's Keating Argues for Exchanges with China"

Richard Halloran, a freelance writer in Honolulu, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (2/22):

"... The impasse appeared to have been broken when US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on the eve of her trip to Asia that the US and China 'will resume mid-level military-to-military discussions later this month.'

"Clinton's disclosure caused mild surprise in the Pentagon and at the Pacific Command in Hawaii, where defense officials wondered why such an announcement had not come from Secretary of Defense Robert Gates or Keating, who is responsible for military exchanges with the Chinese. One official shrugged it off as a 'rookie mistake' from an administration still getting its feet on the ground. ..."

WANG